



MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor Thomas Tomzak and Members of the City Council
From: Phillip L. Rodenberg, City Manager, and Beverly R. Cameron, Assistant City Manager
Date: March 21, 2007
Subject: AutoChalk Questions and Answers

Responses to stated concerns and questions from Council, Merchants and Citizens

1. Disabled Parking (regarding rearview mirror hangtags):

- a. Utilize a Hangtag Registration process – this will allow the driver's hangtag to be linked to the driver's license plate number.
 - i. The driver may register his/her hangtag with the Police Department. In fact, there will be wording on all citations advising people with disabled hangtags how to go about registering their hangtag with the Police Department.
 - ii. 60 days prior to use of AutoChalk, the City Parking Enforcement Officers can begin compiling a list of disabled parkers utilizing hangtags. The data will then be loaded into the APIDS database utilized by AutoChalk. This will eliminate the unnecessary ticketing of these vehicles.
 - iii. The Parking Enforcement Officers have already identified 4 cars with disabled tags that are seen on a regular basis. They rarely see additional disabled hangtags, so this may be a relatively minor issue to manage.
- b. Appeals Process:
 - i. The first parking violation generates ONLY a warning – no fine is assessed. This policy is in place for all drivers, not only disabled drivers.
 - ii. If a driver using a hangtag is ticketed inappropriately, they can appeal. And if a hangtag driver does send us the ticket with his/her license plate data, we can add them to the database already being developed to avoid further ticketing.
 - iii. Additionally, we will be implementing a 21-day "start period", when we will issue only warnings for the first 21 days AutoChalk is in use.

2. Warnings ONLY will be issued for the first 3 weeks that AutoChalk is implemented:

- a. All mailed citations for two-hour parking violations will be WARNINGS ONLY for the first 21 days.
- b. This will allow the public to become educated as to how the system works. It also will clarify the City's intention of encouraging long-term parkers to avoid the two-hour spaces.
- c. NOTE: If someone receives multiple warnings during the "Start-Up Period", it is our intention that the driver will learn to either change his/her parking location, or realize the consequences of utilizing short-term parking for long-term use.

3. Concern over the issuance of multiple tickets in a short time frame:

- a. We see this as an entirely avoidable situation, and one where we can show excellent customer service to the visitors to our City.
- b. The first violation is, as already stated, only a warning with no fine assessed. We will also implement a 7-day grace period during which no additional violations can be issued. AutoChalk's APIDS software can easily manage this. This will put a complete stop to the chance of people receiving multiple tickets in the time immediately following a first violation.

4. Parking Enforcement Officer (PEO) presence downtown:

- a. A major advantage to the AutoChalk system is that using it will improve the productivity of the PEOs to the extent that they will still have time to walk the downtown streets. They will do this in order to patrol for parking violations other than excessive parking time, such as fire hydrant violations, crosswalk violations, driveway blocking violations, fire lane violations, etc.
- b. AutoChalk does not have to be our only method of monitoring parking time in downtown. We still can utilize the current system of manual chalking with handwritten tickets, if necessary. However, it is important to emphasize that AutoChalk would be the preferred and primary method of parking enforcement, with walking being an occasional alternative.
- c. By no means will AutoChalk act as a mechanical replacement for human beings. A PEO will be in the vehicle while the AutoChalk system is in use, and that will keep a pair of eyes and ears in the downtown area. Also, the time savings realized by AutoChalk will give the PEOs the chance to walk the downtown area while monitoring the parking violations mentioned above. It is critical to realize that the machine will not be replacing the human being. The human being will simply become more effective at enforcing the law.

5. Computer and technical support:

- a. The technical expertise possessed by the creators of AutoChalk (Bill Franklin and team) is excellent. Mr. Bill Franklin, President, Tannery Creek, is a registered professional engineer, and during his tenure with Certicom Corporation, he managed a professional services and solutions group. Clients included XM Satellite Radio, Honeywell, and RIM – the maker of the Blackberry. His team received a NASA "Space Technology Hall of Fame" award for their work on the XM Satellite Radio solution. When he left Certicom to form Tannery Creek, Bill formed a team of fellow engineers to be the product development team. As a result, their focus is on continually improving their products based on customer feedback and implementation results. Their focus on parking enforcement automation is one based on years of experience in designing data communications, portable monitoring equipment and information security.
- b. The equipment used by the AutoChalk system has been field-tested in other applications for law enforcement:
 - i. The industrial-quality Sony digital cameras are made to withstand rigorous use, including shocks and vibrations, and their life expectancy is over 6 years.
 - ii. AutoChalk utilizes the Panasonic Toughbook computer, currently in use by hundreds of public safety organizations, including police and fire departments nationwide, such as Fredericksburg and Stafford County.
 - iii. The GPS software is the same used by numerous companies, and is also utilized by the Japanese railway system for locomotive tracking.

- c. AutoChalk will provide the City with an “escrow” account for the design, in order to protect the investment. This equates to an assurance by Tannery Creek that we will essentially “own” our system, and in the event Tannery Creek should cease operations, we would then look elsewhere for support from vendors utilizing similar software.

6. Backup system if AutoChalk is inoperable/out for maintenance:

- a. The backup process will be to revert to our current system of walking, chalking and ticketing.
- b. We will need to prepare for this possibility in the City Code, in order to confirm that the manually issued tickets default to the lowest nominal fine (\$15.00 has been proposed).

7. Impact of AutoChalk on the daily schedule of the City’s PEOs:

- a. When the PEO walks the downtown business area, it typically requires 1.25 – 1.5 hours of his time.
- b. The same area can be covered by AutoChalk in 20 minutes.
- c. When the PEO walks the larger downtown area – including the downtown business area and the surrounding region – it requires upwards of 4.5 hours to walk.
- d. The same area can be covered by AutoChalk in one hour.
- e. The substantial time savings experienced by the PEO will allow the monitoring of other areas in the city that have long needed attention, including areas outside of the immediate downtown region, as well as the neighborhoods surrounding the University.
- f. Equipping the PEO with a vehicle offers another benefit to our parking system. If there is a parking complaint in the city, the PEO can respond to the scene, which will avoid tying up on-duty police officers.
- g. The area around the train station is one that has long been underserved in terms of parking enforcement. With AutoChalk, the PEO will be able to better monitor this area, resulting in improved management of the lots providing access to the VRE and Amtrak and better protection of the surrounding neighborhoods.
- h. An important point in the implementation of AutoChalk is that while it will obviously increase the number of issued citations, the more important result is that it will quickly encourage compliance with the two-hour parking limit. Generating turnover with our current parking spaces is the City’s single best method of managing the parking situation.

8. Inclement weather concerns:

- a. A day of heavy rain becomes a day of essentially unlimited parking in the downtown business area because the PEOs rarely chalk in the rain. Downtown merchants are aware of this, and they see the resulting problem of a total lack of vehicle turnover in the downtown area. AutoChalk is unaffected by inclement weather, which will significantly enhance the City’s parking enforcement when it is raining.

9. Important issues to keep in mind:

- a. It is common knowledge that our current method of parking enforcement is insufficient. In order to improve the situation, we must change the method of how we effectively enforce parking. Among the options presented, AutoChalk is the most cost effective solution to the parking enforcement problem. City Staff did a thorough review of innovative options to solve this concern, and the alternatives were:
 - i. Leave the system as it is.
 - ii. Provide current PEOs with handheld citation devices.
 - iii. Hire additional PEOs and maintain the current walk-and-chalk system.

- iv. Hire additional PEOs and provide them with handheld citation devices.
 - v. Implement the digital tire chalking system known as AutoChalk.
- b. AutoChalk is by far the most cost effective solution. Although the initial cost is higher, year-to-year costs are lower with AutoChalk, primarily because we avoid the additional salary and benefit costs associated with additional personnel.
- c. Increased parking enforcement will obviously cost more money. If we do not purchase AutoChalk, we will have to make significant changes in the current system, leading to either additional personnel and/or additional equipment, and many of those costs exceed the AutoChalk estimates, especially when viewed on an annual basis.
- d. The initial cost of AutoChalk includes more than the system itself. It also incorporates the cost of a 4-wheel-drive vehicle in the request for funding.
- e. Implementation of the graduated fines program and the issuance of a first citation as a “warning” can be most easily managed by a system such as AutoChalk. Putting the graduated fines and warning citations into place is a critical step in enforcing the two-hour limit while maintaining a goodwill mindset toward first offenders.
- f. There will be no long-term record keeping in terms of maintaining a history of every vehicle monitored by AutoChalk. The system on the AutoChalk vehicle clears its cache of vehicle data every 24-48 hours, once the data has been downloaded to the system at the Police Department. The system utilized in the office at the Police Department to actually print and mail the citations keeps only the information on the ticketed vehicles, and deletes all other vehicle information. Data pertaining to ticketed vehicles needs to be maintained regardless of what system is in place. The intention here is to make it plain that there is absolutely no way to unnecessarily hold the data on the unticketed vehicles, which negates concerns over information control.

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